Thought and Action: A Tribute to Stuart Hampshire

P. M. S. HACKER

1. Hampshire's career

Stuart Hampshire was born in 1914. He was educated at Repton and came up to Balliol College in 1933 to read Literae Humaniores. He graduated in 1936 and was elected to a Fellowship at All Souls. There he became a member of J .L. Austin's philosophical discussion group which met weekly in Isaiah Berlin's rooms at All Souls. Other members of the group were A. J. Ayer, D. G. C. MacNabb, D. McKinnon and A. D. Woozley. Like many young men of his generation, Hampshire was attracted to logical positivism, which, he later wrote, 'seemed to me to be starting philosophy all over again in the clear light of a rational day, and outside the dusty, dark and bookish rooms of the established professors'. In particular, the anti-metaphysical thrust of the Vienna circle and its insistence upon verification as a criterion of meaningfulness undermined not only Hegelian metaphysics, but also Marxism as a doctrine of historical inevitability, Comtean positivism and liberal theories of progress. Logical positivism imposed upon philosophy a discipline which curbed the flights of philosophical pretension, a method of logico-linguistic analysis which promised to ensure sober piecemeal progress, and a commitment to clarity of argument and reasoning.

During the war, Hampshire served in intelligence, tracking the operations of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Himmler's Central Command, which controlled the whole of the SS), and in the immediate aftermath of the war he was involved in the interrogation of some of the leading Nazis and SS officers. He worked briefly as personal assistant to the Minister of State at the Foreign Office until late 1947, when he returned to academic life as a lecturer in philosophy at University College, London. In 1950 he became a Fellow of New College. It was while he was there that he published his first book *Spinoza* (1951) in the Pelican series in philosophy edited by Ayer. It was a lucid exposition of one of the most difficult of philosophers, and was well received. Spinoza's philosophy provided the inspiration for much of Hampshire's subsequent work,

doi:10.1017/S0031819105000227 ©2005 The Royal Institute of Philosophy

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

both in its conception of the obligations of philosophical reflection, and in its conception of human freedom which Hampshire was to develop. In 1955 he moved back to All Souls as domestic bursar and research fellow. In 1959 he published *Thought and Action*, which, together with Strawson's *Individuals*, published the same year, broke the mould of Oxford analytic philosophy of the previous decade, aspiring as it did to the greatest generality, by contrast with the piecemeal style of philosophy which had characterized work throughout the fifties. Like *Individuals*, *Thought and Action* begins with very general reflections on the nature of reference and predication. But it rapidly moves from logico-linguistic and ontological concerns to an examination of the nature of intentional agency, which provides the *Leitmotiv* of the book. Its theme is the unity of thought and action, and its philosophical and ethical implications. It sets its face against the Cartesian duality of the mental and the physical, and against the subjectless atomism of impressions and ideas which empiricism inherited from Hume, advocating instead the indispensability to our conception of thought and action of the categories of intentional agency.

In 1960, Hampshire was appointed to the Grote Chair at University College, London. However, he remained in London for only three years, before taking up a professorship in Princeton in 1963. In 1965, he published *Freedom of the Individual*, an extended version of the De Carle lectures which he had delivered at the University of Otago in New Zealand the previous year. It is a further development of ideas already introduced in *Thought and Action*. Here Hampshire distinguishes inanimate powers and possibilities from human powers and possibilities, the latter being dependent upon the notions of will and desire as formed, discovered, reflected upon and determined by self-conscious agents. And these distinctions in turn lead to differentiation between two kinds of knowledge of the future, inductive knowledge, on the one hand, and an agent's knowledge of his own future actions as emerging from his intentions, on the other. A free agent is one whose beliefs and desires are actively endorsed or rejected as appropriate or inappropriate relative to their grounds and to his circumstances, and whose intentions issue from his self-conscious decisions. Freedom is inseparable from intentional agency.

Hampshire returned to Oxford in 1970 as Warden of Wadham College in succession to Bowra, where he remained for fifteen years. In 1971 he published a volume of his collected papers *Freedom of Mind and Other Essays*. Thenceforth his writings were primarily in the domain of moral and political philosophy, although, as his

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

readers would expect, he continued to view ethical and political reflection in philosophy as inseparable from a considered philosophy of psychology which gives primacy to the notion of intentional agency. In 1972 he published *Morality and Pessimism*, his Leslie Stephen lecture at the University of Cambridge. In 1977 he published *Two Theories of Morality*, an expanded version of his Thank-Offering to Britain Fund lectures, delivered the previous year at the British Academy. Here he compared and contrasted the two radically different conceptions of morality advocated by Aristotle and Spinoza. In 1983, he published *Morality and Conflict*. In 1985, he returned to the USA as professor of philosophy at Stanford University, where he remained until his retirement in 1991. In 1989, he published *Innocence and Experience*, one central theme of which is further developed in *Justice is Conflict* (1999). Hampshire died in 2004.

The hallmark of Hampshire's writings is not only generality—and a remarkable overview of the interconnectedness of the fundamental questions in philosophy, but also absence of technical jargon and consequent accessibility. Philosophy, as exemplified by his writings, is, among other things, civilized reflection on the human condition and our conception of our condition—which should be, and by and large can be, made intelligible to the educated, civilized reader. In this tribute to him, I shall focus upon only one theme, albeit a central one, in Hampshire's work—the ramifying role of intention in our conceptual scheme. I shall survey the central argument of the first three chapters of *Thought and Action* and the third chapter of *Freedom of the Individual*. These contain a wealth of insights, many of which have not been assimilated or adequately assimilated by contemporary philosophers.

2. Thought and Action

The central theme of *Thought and Action* is the unity of the cogitative and active powers of man. 'We are in the world', Hampshire nicely remarks, 'as bodies among bodies, not only as observers but as active experimenters. We could not ever be observers unless we were sometimes active experimenters, and we could not ever be experimenters unless we were sometimes observers' (p. 53).[1] We could not be spectators of the passing scene unless we were also actors in the unfolding play, could not be perceivers unless we were

[1] All parenthetical references are to *Thought and Action* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

also manipulators, could not be thinkers unless we were also doers. This is a truism to which philosophers have paid too little attention. For it has been part of the Cartesian heritage that has cast its long shadow over philosophy of the modern era that thought, sensation, sense-perception, emotion and will are given, incorrigibly and indubitably, in logical independence of knowledge of ourselves as active animals in a world of material things. It has been part of the empiricist heritage handed down to us by Hume, that our experience consists of a succession of impressions and ideas. And even Kant, who sensed more clearly than any other philosopher the fundamental flaws in the Cartesian and empiricist conceptions of ourselves and our experience of the world around us, entertained the idea, elaborated in his imaginary subject of transcendental psychology, that what he called 'the unity of consciousness' is the result of the mind's transcendental synthesis of intuitions given it in the forms of space and time. Such synthesis is indeed an activity, but an activity of the transcendental self, not of an active agent who is a space-occupying particular moving within a world of objects. It was Hampshire's contention that failure to apprehend the unity of thought and action, vitiated and continues to vitiate a great deal of modern philosophy. The task he set himself in *Thought and Action* was to unravel the conceptual commitments and involvements consequent upon recognition of the primacy of intentional action in our conceptual scheme. That we are, and that we unavoidably conceive of ourselves and are aware of ourselves, as active agents occupying a particular place at a particular time in a world of material things through which we move intentionally has implications that ramify throughout our conceptual scheme. Our conceptions of ourselves as space-occupying particulars and of other space-occupying particulars as distinct from ourselves, our concepts of our perceptions and their objects, of our intentions and their execution in action, of our beliefs and their truth or falsity form a seamless web, each element of which is necessarily connected, directly or indirectly, to all the others. The interconnectedness of these concepts, Hampshire argues, renders incoherent the philosophical vision embodied both in the Cartesian and in the empiricist world-picture.

The task is ambitious. It is executed with panache, with a boldness of vision over a wide range of problematic philosophical thought through which its author moves with mastery.

Hampshire announces his themes in the 'Introduction' as an exploration of 'certain familiar contrasts: the contrast between that which is unavoidable in human thought and that which is

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contingent and changeable: between inner thought and its natural expression in speech and action: between that which confronts a man as the situation before him and that which is his own response to it: between knowledge and decision: between criticism and practice: between abstract philosophical opinions and the concrete varieties of experience.' His aim, he declares, is 'not to find definite solutions to the problems connected with these contrasts', but to trace connections between them, and thereby to bring moral argument closer to philosophy of mind. While acknowledging the rewards of piecemeal analysis of contemporary philosophy of the 1950s, Hampshire suggested that 'it is possible that there are purposes and interests which require that accurate and step-by-step analysis should not always be preferred to a more general survey and more tentative opinions, even in philosophy (p. 9).' This is perhaps more problematic than he realized. Crucial connections are held to obtain and indeed to be necessary—but it all too often remains unclear what the nature of these alleged necessities is. To be sure, unlike so many of *our* contemporaries, he does not hide his insights behind the figleaf of so-called metaphysical necessity, which is merely an obfuscating name of a problem and not even a gesture at its solution. Nevertheless, although necessitarian claims are often made, nowhere in the book does Hampshire venture to explain what is meant by saying that something is a necessary truth, or what necessitates that we think of such-and-such as so-and-so.

This lacuna, if such it be, goes hand in hand with a general opacity regarding the status of philosophical assertions. The claim that his insightful general philosophical pronouncements are *opinions* is problematic. For it is not uncontroversial to suggest that there is room in philosophy for *opinions*, particularly if the claims that are advanced are held to express necessities of thought. For opinions may be true or false—but not nonsense. But if what is advanced as a necessity of thought is mistaken, then it is either a false empirical claim or a nonsense.[2] I shall attempt to remedy this lacuna in Hampshire's argument. For it seems to me that his insights are not opinions, but are, for the most part, necessities of thought that reflect the rule-governed connectedness of our conceptual scheme in general, and of those parts of it pertaining to thought and action, in particular.

[2] One may, unilluminatingly, characterize the proposition that red is a colour as a necessary truth, but the suggestion that red is a smell is as nonsensical a sentence as 'The number 2 turned green and got married'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

3. The subject

We are in the world as bodies—spatio-temporal particulars—among bodies, not only as observers but as active experimenters. Every observer is aware of himself as one such space-occupying item in the world. The external world is a system of independently existing objects, acting and reacting upon one another. We perceive such objects, not as 'outside the mind', but as outside, or better, as independent of, us. They are independent of us not merely in the sense that their existence is independent of our perception and of our thought about them, they are spatially discontinuous with our body, and also, unlike our body, independent of our will—there being no such thing as psycho-kinesis. A cardinal error of empiricist philosophers was to represent us as passive observers receiving impressions from 'outside' the mind, where 'outside' includes our own body. But we find ourselves, from the very beginning able to act *upon* objects around us. And to act thus is to move at will and to bring about changes in other bodies, to move them by pushing or pulling them, to pick them up and handle them. I not only perceive my body, I also control it. I move, and move my limbs, at will. I do not always need to infer from my observations alone that I have made a movement. Rather, I know directly that I moved or tried to move, or that I did not try, but was rather moved by something else. No knowledge, Hampshire stresses, is more direct and underived than this knowledge of the fact of my own intention to move or to bring about change (pp. 47f.). I find my power of movement limited by the resistances of objects around me. This felt resistance to my will, in conjunction with my perceptions, defines me and my own situation as an object among other objects. It is a mistake to try to delineate fundamental features of our conceptual scheme on the basis of the supposition that our only contact with objects and so with the world of physical things, is through perception, in which objects are presented to our passive mind. Both in perception and in the least of our movements, we are aware of ourselves as one object among others, one space-occupying particular among others. Being self-moving voluntary agents, we move among the objects around us. Being perceivers, our viewpoint changes as we move. The changing standpoint of the observer, Hampshire stresses, is to be understood as a change of his situation *in* the world, not in his relation *to* the world from the 'outside' as it were—as the empiricists represented it as being. One might maintain that we are aware of ourselves as bodies solely through the impressions of the senses. One might then further argue that when we move and act, we always verify this by

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the sense of touch and kinaesthetic sensation. But even if we say this, we cannot go further and say that it is only by touch and the other senses that we know that we possess a body and are not merely detached thinking things (p. 50).

What are we to make of these claims? They are important truisms. But what is their status? Some seem to be presented as elements of neonate psychology—it is true enough that in some sense 'I find myself from the beginning able to act upon objects around me'. But what is the bearing of this on philosophical thought. Others seem to be phenomenological descriptions—it is true enough that both in perception and in the least of our movements we are, in some sense, aware of ourselves as one object among others. But what bearing does phenomenology have upon the delineation of necessities of thought? It is, I think, evident that Hampshire does not want to present his observations as empirical truths pertaining to learning theory or as observations of a dubious science of phenomenology. His observations are intended to draw our attention to 'necessities of thought'. They are, by and large, intended as conceptual truths—hence as expressions of internal relations among the entities which they invoke.

If so, then it is beside the point that we are aware of ourselves from the beginning as able to act—even though it is a salutary reminder to empiricist inclined philosophers. It is not obviously true that we are at any moment aware of ourselves as having a body, and aware of ourselves as located somewhere at some time—but even if it is true, it is not clear why this apparently phenomenological truth is relevant to philosophy. It is presumably an empirical truth that even non-language-using animals do not have to *find out* where their limbs are, or whether they are lying down or standing up—they would not survive long if they had to do so. What *is* important is that the concepts we employ, in particular the concept of a voluntary, intentional agent is embedded in a network of concepts of space and time, of physical body, of perceiving and of object perceived, of action and intention, which are so tightly woven as to preclude the idea of an observer who is not also an active agent, of a thinker who is not also an actor. Such ideas are precluded, it must be argued, because they make no sense. And if we look at the details of Hampshire's arguments, we shall find that in spite of the occasional whiff of phenomenology, and despite occasional remarks that smack of learning theory, for the most part that is precisely what he attempts to show.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4. Perception

So, again, we are not only observers, we are also actors—experimenters. To observe is, *inter alia*, to learn what obstructions there are in the environment. To experiment, in its original sense, is to act with a view to perceiving what then happens. Each language-using human being perceives objects around him, and in identifying them, also fixes in his mind his own situation in the world. All perception of which we can form any idea is the perception of a finite observer moving among the objects he observes from changing points of view in a common world. The conception of experience as a succession of impressions and ideas passively received and then compared by the mind, detached from embodiment in any one position, is incoherent. For then it would be a contingent matter that one perceives with one's eyes, feels things with one's hands and body; that one's visual and auditory perceptions change as one moves; that one can switch one's observations at will from one object to another. But these are not contingent matters of fact at all. Sense-datum philosophers inherited the empiricist conception. Their failure to translate categorical material object statements into hypothetical statements about sense-data was rooted in the fact that, at the very least, the antecedents of the envisaged hypotheticals must specify the objective standpoint of the observer—and that fact signifies the futility of their programme. The fundamental error is not to acknowledge that the standpoint of the observer is one physical fact among others—that the observer is always a self-moving body among other bodies which he observes and intentionally manipulates. A physical object is recognized as a potential obstruction or as something to be manipulated, occupying some definite position in relation to the observer at the moment of perception. Touch, not sight, is primitively the most authoritative of the senses, the natural criterion of physical reality, just because acting upon objects necessarily involves touching—the contact of one's body with a resisting body that is not one's own (p. 48). And touching, handling and manipulating things are misrepresented as the passive reception of data—for here perception and action are united. It is essential to action that we should in general be able to discover by observation whether we have in fact achieved what we intended to achieve. Action and perception are thus complementary, and can neither be assimilated one to the other nor separated one from the other (p. 52).

We have here a battery of insightful remarks. But this bird's eye view needs supplementation by detailed analysis of the conceptual

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

connections indicated but not demonstrated. To do so would be, I fancy, a theme for a long chapter on the philosophy of perception. But let me try to sketch a few fragments of the kinds of arguments that might further the enterprise.

It is indeed a non-contingent fact that we see with the organ of vision, denominated 'the eye'. For an organ to be the organ of vision, it is necessary, but not sufficient, that it be light sensitive. In addition, it must be used in detecting from a distance the presence of visible objects and their visible properties, such as colour, shape, size, and movement. It must be useless in pitch dark; and it must be such that it cannot be used to detect objects that are occluded from the line of vision. A logical criterion for whether an animal sees something is whether it detects what it detects by the use of an organ satisfying such conditions, e.g. that it opens its eyes in order to detect and cannot thus detect visibilia with its eyes closed, that it moves closer in order to discern better, moves around objects to perceive what was occluded or partly occluded, puts its eye to an aperture in order to see through it, etc. Such characteristics are internal properties of what we *call* 'possessing an organ of vision'.

Similarly, it is not a contingent fact that an animal apprehends the presence of solid objects by touch—for it is a logical criterion for ascribing to an animal apprehension of the solidity of an object that it reacts appropriately to touching the object with its limbs and body and apprehending its relative impenetrability. These reactions are various, depending upon the size and nature of the object, the character of the perceiving animal and its purposes. That it does so apprehend the properties of the object is manifest in its behaviour, in whether the object is apprehended as an obstruction, which the animal then skirts around, or as something that can support the weight of the animal who then treads on it or climbs up or across it, or as something manipulable. And to manipulate an object, to stand on it, to lean against it, to push and pull it, to pick it up and throw it are not mere forms of perception, let alone of passive reception of ideas or impressions, but rather forms of *interaction* with things. Ideas and impressions may stand in regular relations of co-existence and succession, but, as Berkeley rightly noted, not of causation in its most primitive and basic sense, viz. making something happen by acting *on* it. And the hallmark of action and activity is substantiality. I can engage with my environment only because I am a living, self-moving substance. To manipulate an object is bring about changes in or to it by acting on it. To move an object is to bring about a change in its position by pushing, pulling or picking it up, etc., and to experience an object as an immovable obstacle is

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to try to move it by pushing or pulling it and to fail. These are actions, not impressions—actions of an intentional self-moving substance among substances.

I doubt the phenomenological observation that we are constantly aware of ourselves as a body among bodies, or even that in every perception and in the least action we are so aware of ourselves. For whether we are or are not so aware depends upon the direction of our attention, which is not ubiquitously reflexive. When sunk in a brown study, I am not aware of myself as sitting or standing, or even as perceiving whatever I perceive. But what is true is that at any moment of normal waking life, I *can become* so aware of myself. I may become aware of such facts about my location and disposition by sudden realization or by perception, and may remain thus aware until my attention is distracted or I shift the focus of my attention. Of course, I have been aware, since childhood, *that* I am what is called 'a human being', a living creature among others, and hence aware *that* I am a body among bodies—but it is not something of which I am or need be constantly conscious.

There is no doubt that the empiricists mistakenly assimilated perception to passivity. But while there is a sense in which one is passive in seeing what one sees when one opens one's eyes, it is obvious that in looking, inspecting, watching, scrutinizing one is active. It is not up to me to see or not to see what is visible before me when I open my eyes (although I may fail to notice things in view)—for our perceptual powers are not, in this respect, two-way powers to do or refrain at will, and their actualization is not a voluntary act. But it is up to me whether to look again or to look elsewhere, whether to follow a moving object with my eyes or to look at another object or just to shut my eyes, whether to move closer or to pick up the object and carry it to the light—and these are voluntary acts. In this sense, even in the case of vision, perception is intimately interwoven with action. And that too is built into our concepts by way of the criteria for ascribing to an animal visual detection—for it is a criterion for whether an animal has spotted a moving object that it follow the course of the object by moving its eyes and head to keep it in view, that it respond to the object's visible change of position by changing its position.

That my visual perceptions change as I move is indeed non-contingent. For if I move left or right, then A, which is occluded by B, becomes visible. If I move closer to B, then more of A becomes occluded. And if I move around B, then its back comes into view. It is part of the concept of an opaque material object that it has surfaces, not all of which are visible from one point of view. The

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

occlusion properties of objects *are* their visible spatial relations.[3] Given that the line of sight is straight, the mathematical theory of vision, first elaborated in Euclid's *Optics*, is an a priori theory of what is visible from a viewpoint—and there is no such thing as vision which is not from a viewpoint.

The complementarity of action and perception is essential to the possibility of action in the execution of a plan. I would not be an *agent* unless I could *act on* items in my environment, and I would not be an intentional agent unless I could perceive what I intend to act on and form reasonable expectations accordingly. And, as Hampshire emphasizes, I could not foresee the future in my intentional actions unless I possessed such background inductive knowledge as enables me to form plans, nor could I execute my intentions unless I could follow the evolving trajectory of my actions.

Such considerations, and a multitude of others pertaining to our concepts of space and time, of material object and of motion, of a perceiving agent and of perceptual faculties and organs, help to illuminate the manifold conceptual connections which Hampshire invokes and intimates, but often does not pause to elaborate.

5. Action

So, yet again, we are both observers and actors. We distinguish ourselves from other things, Hampshire notes (p. 51), first, as being in a certain situation, as being here rather than there, and secondly, as being capable of planning to move from here to there. My situation is fixed for me as the place *from* which I move my arms and other limbs, which is also the place *from* which I see and move things around me. The thought of the possibility of changing my situation in the world is always present to me. As I move at will, my point of view correspondingly changes, and it is in this way that I explore the world arranged, as it were, around me as its centre (p. 54). Even at the most rudimentary stages of consciousness, I always distinguish that which I myself do intentionally in changing my situation from that which happens to me (p. 51). A human being is aware of himself as the moving locus from which he perceives all that he perceives. It is intentional movement that gives us our sense of 'being in the world', a sense which we would lack were the 'given'

[3] For more detailed elaboration, see J. Hyman, *The Imitation of Nature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 80f.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nothing but a succession of impressions and ideas. That empiricist thought would require us to think of our own movements as mere impressions too, and hence that the correlation between changes in one type of impression (bodily sensations) and changes in the other (the data of external sense) was merely a contingent and surprising matter of fact. 'The most unavoidable feature of our consciousness', Hampshire observes, 'is the initiation of change at will, the changing of position and therefore of our relation to other things.' (p. 68) That is why the Humean notion of experience is incoherent. For, not only should we be sceptical of the obtainability of the notions of impressions and ideas independently of notions of ourselves as self-moving agents in a world of independent objects, but also we should be sceptical of the possibility of extracting from Hume's meagre conceptual resources the essential distinctions between what we do and what happens to us, between what we wish and what we intend and do intentionally. (p. 70).

An agent could not learn or coherently use a vocabulary, or make statements about himself and the world he encounters, unless he regarded himself as one self-moving observer among others, and one body among others, changing his own position at will. For it is a necessity in all but the most rudimentary uses of language that we should refer to persisting objects, employing some criteria of identity through change; and it is equally necessary that the speaker should have the means of indicating his own viewpoint. The first-person pronoun is not just one indexical among others. For the first-person singular form is the nucleus upon which all the other referential devices depend. It is, as it were, their point of origin. Any place referred to is at some definite distance from *here*, and any event or time referred to is traceable to *now*, to the speaker's standpoint (p. 87). And the final point of reference, Hampshire holds, the point at which all a person's statements are 'attached to reality', is the speaker's reference to himself as one thing, one person, among others. The Cartesian idea that the first-person pronoun could have an intelligible use to refer to a subject of experience independently of that subject's existence as a being in the world of objects is not coherent.

Some of the fundamental categories of thought can be traced to our elemental intentional acts of moving and manipulating and their conceptual involvements. It is, Hampshire contends, above all in intentional movement that temporal intervals of *before* and *after* impose themselves as necessary forms of all experience. For it is not only in perception, but also in making a movement or initiating a change, that we perceive the relation of *before* and *after*, as directly

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as we perceive the changing qualities of things. For any action, as the intended bringing about of an effect, has a trajectory, and so a relation of *before* and *after* within it (pp. 71ff.). The future is that which is alterable in principle by action. And since we look upon the present situation as arising from the immediate past by some agency and as passing into some other situation by some force or agency that is operative now, the categories of causal explanation have their roots within our own experience of ourselves as agents (p. 73). 'To myself', Hampshire writes, 'I am always a continuing thing producing changes, of which I know directly that I am the cause. The notion of a perceiving subject is also the notion of a continuing, embodied intentional agent, who displaces or is displaced by the things around him' (p. 85). And 'I did it', as opposed to 'It just happened' or 'Someone else did it', is the primary and unquestionable indication of my own, utterly distinct existence as an object of reference (p. 72).

It will again be noted that this wide-ranging synoptic view is presented as an admixture of phenomenology, conjectures concerning concept-genesis, and conceptual analysis. But, again, I am inclined to think that the latter is Hampshire's primary intent, and that what appears in the form of (highly plausible) speculation about the order of concept acquisition and the context of concept-genesis can be given a purely a priori gloss in the forms of connective conceptual analysis. For only thus, it seems to me, can the manifold connections Hampshire adumbrates be characterized as a priori connections of thought. So I shall again try to supplement a selection of Hampshire's insights, albeit with full awareness that all these themes need lengthy and detailed treatment, which cannot be essayed here.

There would be no use for the indexical 'here' other than as spoken by a space-occupying intentional agent located at a particular place, and no use for 'now' save as uttered at a particular time. For their user, for me for example, 'here' is where *I* am and 'now' is when *I* utter it. Moreover, it is evident that there would be no use, either public or private, for the first-person pronoun, unless it were emitted from the mouth of the speaker located somewhere detectable or determinable at a given time. If our words were always heard in the same tones from one and the same loudspeaker, no matter where we were located, the first-person pronoun would lose its point.[4] So, my location is necessarily the location of my body, i.e. that body from the mouth of which my words, e.g. 'I am here', are uttered.

[4] As Wittgenstein noted, see A. Ambrose (ed.), *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932-1935* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p. 24.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The notion of *my body* is equally tightly woven into a web of internal relations. My body is the body the eyes of which are my eyes and are the eyes with which I see; it is the body injury to which is injury to me and hurts me; and *these* arms are the arms I move when I gesture. It is the body all true predications of which are also true predications of me (although the converse does not hold). Although I can be said to be *a* body, i.e. a space-occupying particular, it would be wrong to say that I am *my body*. The use of the possessive here, which does not indicate possession, is singular. It is complementary to the phrase 'my mind'; and I am no more identical with my mind than I am identical with my body. What *has* both a mind and a body is the living human being. A living human being is a body, i.e. a space- occupying particular, but cannot unmisleadingly be said to be identical with *his body*.

It is, I fancy, hyperbole to suggest that *the thought* of the possibility of changing my situation in the world is always present to me. No thought is ubiquitous. Paralysis and constraint apart, however, the *possibility of moving* is always with me, otherwise I would not be a voluntary agent, who can move at will. And it is also true that, paralysis and constraint apart, I always *know* that I can change my position and location at will, otherwise I would not be a self-conscious intentional agent, who can intentionally move from here to there for some reason. To be sure, I may become paralysed, lose my powers of voluntary movement, and still retain my powers to think and reason at will. But it is arguable, although it cannot be argued here, that the idea of an intentional agent who never *had* the power of voluntary movement (and speech), but who nevertheless had the power of thought is not coherent.

There may be *some sense* in which it is true that 'even at the most rudimentary stages of consciousness, I always distinguish that which I myself do ... from that which happens to me'. But I am not sure what Hampshire has in mind here. To be sure, babies and animals alike react differently to what happens to them, e.g. when they are moved, from the way they behave when they themselves move. But a language user distinguishes in thought and speech between what he does voluntarily and intentionally and what happens to him. He possesses a multitude of concepts of activity and passivity, which he applies unreflectively to himself, and can *say*, without evidence, of any movement of his whether he moved or was moved. And this capacity is indeed integral to our concept of an intentional, language-using agent.

Intentional agency necessarily involves not only the power to express one's intentions without evidence, but also the knowledge of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

what one is doing when one executes one's intentions. For if I V, and do not know that I am Ving, then I am not Ving intentionally, but unintentionally, accidentally or by mistake. So what I do intentionally, I do consciously and am conscious of doing, e.g. trying to persuade you that such and such. But although what I do unintentionally I do not *do* consciously, it is something I may become and *be* conscious of doing, e.g. boring you to tears.

An intentional agent is the author of his intentions, and in determining my own intentions, I also know, *ceteris paribus*, what I shall be doing in the future when I execute them. For I foresee my future actions in my intentions. That knowledge is not inductive—I do not know that I shall be in London next week because I intend to go to London and know by induction that I normally execute my intentions. Rather, I can only be said to have formed the intention to V if I believe that I have both the ability to V and the opportunity to V, and have no reason to believe that I shall fail or be prevented from Ving. So, having formed the intention to V tomorrow, I know, other things being equal, that I shall V tomorrow, in as much as my will is set, and I know that there are no obstacles to my project. Furthermore, my ability to say what I intend, and my knowledge of my own intentional actions are not derived from any impressions or ideas. To intend is not to have an impression, which I report in saying that I intend. It is neither an experience nor an inner act or activity.

6. Intentional action

It is one of the major strengths of Hampshire's philosophical vision of ourselves and of our nature to give primacy to the concept of intentional agency. For he apprehended that the notion of intention is a node in our conceptual web at which a multitude of crucial conceptual strands meet: 'the notion of the will, the relation of mind and body, the difference between observing a rule or convention and merely having a habit' (p. 96), as well, we may add, as the notions of belief, of reasons for believing, acting and feeling, the various distinctions between what is passive and what is active in our lives, the notion of control and self-control, and that of freedom. An error running through empiricist philosophy is to represent human consciousness primarily as a state of passive awareness (p. 94), of reception of experience in all its multicoloured variety, passing before the mind, of awareness of 'a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement ... a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, and glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.'[5] But, Hampshire suggests, a much more decisive difference between waking and sleeping lies in the necessity of intended action in the one case and mere natural movement without intention in the other. In one's waking life, there is necessarily always an answer to the question 'What is he doing?' To be a conscious human being, and therefore a thinking being, is to have intentions and plans, and to be able to answer the questions 'What are you doing?', and 'What are you intending to do?' (p. 119).

Intention, Hampshire observes, is necessarily associated with the possibility of declaring one's intention. It is characteristic of an intention that it may be formed long in advance of the action intended, and that it may have existed even though it was never executed. That, he suggests, is why intention, as opposed to purpose, is out of place in the context of animal behaviour. It is senseless to speak of what a dog intended to do before it was interrupted or prevented, unless 'It intended to do so-and-so next' is taken to mean 'It would have done so-and-so next, but for being interrupted or prevented'. But that is not what it means in the human case. It is senseless to attribute intentions to an animal which has not the means to reflect upon, and to announce to itself or to others, its own future behaviour (pp. 97f.). Only language-users can be said to have intentions.

Expectation and decision are two complementary aspects of the notion of intentional action (p. 111). One cannot say what a person is trying to do, unless one knows what he expects to happen. To try to V is necessarily to intend to V or to come as close as possible to Ving. To decide to V is necessarily to form the intention to V. To intend to V is necessarily to believe that one will try to V. To intend something to happen as a result of one's Ving is minimally to believe that it may or could happen. For one cannot say 'I intend E to happen, but I am sure it won't' or '... but I believe it impossible', although one may attempt the impossible to demonstrate its impossibility (p. 134).

A subject cannot be ignorant of his intentions, although he may make mistakes in stating them (p. 134). A person unfailingly knows what he is trying to do, simply because it is *his* intention. For doing something intentionally entails consciously doing it; and intending to do something in the future entails knowing that one will do it or at least try to do it on the future occasion. At this point in his

[5] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk I, Pt IV, sect. iv.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

argument, Hampshire makes a striking move which is especially interesting in the light of one of Wittgenstein's radical ideas. The foregoing considerations, he suggests, explain why there is no need for the reflexive knowing that would be implied by the phrase 'knowing what one intends'. 'I know now what I intend to do', Hampshire notes, is a redundant way of saying 'I know now what I shall do', and 'I know what my intentions in doing this are' is an impossibly redundant way of saying 'I am doing this intentionally (or: with intention)' (p. 102). There is no question either of a source of knowledge or of the justification of a claim to knowledge when someone announces that he knows what he is going to do. For he is not making a cognitive claim of any kind, but is rather declaring his intention, and in so doing revealing that his mind is made up (p. 104).

The claim that it is senseless to attribute intentions to animals is controversial. Apart from dogmatic behaviourists, we can all agree that animals are voluntary agents, they possess two-way powers of action, can do what they do because they want to do it and refrain from or resist doing something because they do not want to do it. Certainly they have purposes, and act in pursuit of their goals, try to fulfil their purposes and succeed or fail in their attempt. Some of the things they do are accidental, and surely to do something accidentally is to do it unintentionally? And a creature can do something unintentionally only if it can also do things intentionally.

This is too quick. One can do something accidentally if what one does is not done on purpose, and we have granted that animals can act with a purpose. So if the dog, in rushing to the door to greet its master, knocks over a vase, it has done so accidentally—doing so was not part of its purpose.

Should we deny that mere animals are intentional agents? It is interesting that two leading philosophers of psychology working today take partially opposing views on the matter. Anthony Kenny is in agreement with Hampshire. The grounds for his denial that animals can have intentions is that to act intentionally *is* to act for a reason. But only language-users can act for a reason, in as much as a creature can only be said to act for a reason if it can give a reason to itself or to others. Unlike humans, animals cannot perform acts as answering to a description. So although they can obey commands, they cannot obey a command with the intention that their act satisfy the description specified by the command.[6] By contrast, Bede Rundle holds that although it makes no sense to

[6] A. J. P. Kenny, *The Metaphysics of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 38f.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ascribe to an animal an intention formed in circumstances remote from those of its execution, and hence of ascribing to it an *intention* or *having an intention* which has been formed in advance of action, nevertheless 'intentional' is interchangeable with 'purposive'. Furthermore, when, for example, a lion manoeuvres itself into position for attack and waits for the appropriate moment to charge, we can say that it has the intention of charging, because we are in effect watching a pattern of behaviour that is already under way.[7] It is perhaps noteworthy that Wittgenstein took a similar view.[8]

I agree with Kenny that intentional action is action done for a reason. So if mere animals cannot have reasons for acting and therefore cannot act for a reason, then they cannot have intentions. And if only creatures who can give reasons (and, one might add, *can reason*), can *act for* a reason, then animals cannot act for reasons. I agree with Hampshire that if one can only have intentions if one can form intentions in advance of action, reflect on one's intentions, and have intentions that are never translated even into incipient action, then animals cannot be said to have intentions. But I also agree with Rundle that 'intentional' converges on 'purposive', and that we are inclined to say of an animal that exhibits a trajectory of action already underway that it has the intention of continuing the trajectory of the action. The question is whether one is willing to invoke the notion of reason in an *attenuated* sense, and to apply it to animals, even though they cannot give or reflect on reasons and cannot reason; and so too whether one is willing to apply the notion of an intention in an *attentuated* sense, and apply it to animals who exhibit a trajectory of behaviour, even though they cannot be said to form intentions in advance of action, cannot announce to themselves or to others their intentions, and cannot reflect on their intentions and abandon them on reflection. The matter seems to me more one for reflective decision than for discovery or for realisation of a familiar conceptual link.

Hampshire's suggestion that a subject cannot be ignorant of his intentions, that there is no need for the reflexive knowledge that would be implied by the phrase 'knowing what one intends', since there can neither be a source of such 'knowledge' nor a justification of a knowledge claim when someone announces his intention, and his contention that 'I know now what I intend' or 'I know what my

[7] B. Rundle, *Mind in Action* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 69f.

[8] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), §647: 'What is the natural expression of an intention?—Look at a cat when it stalks a bird; or at a beast when it wants to escape.'

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

intentions are in doing this' are hopelessly redundant ways of saying 'I know now what I shall do' and 'I am doing this intentionally' constitute what might be called a 'redundancy theory of knowledge of first-person intention'. Accordingly, in saying 'I know now what my intentions are', one is not making a cognitive claim at all, but declaring one's intention and, in so doing, revealing that one's mind is made up. This is interestingly reminiscent of Wittgenstein's non-cognitive account of avowals, not only of intentions, but also beliefs, thoughts and sensations. Wittgenstein's suggestion, with which I think Hampshire would agree, is not that the operator 'I know' is redundant here, but that it is not used to make a cognitive claim. Here, 'I know' may serve the purpose of expression of decision, or of concession, or, in appropriate contexts, of making a grammatical statement—as in 'Only you can know your intentions', which amounts to the statement that the subject is the authority on what he intends, and that in the first-person present tense case, there is no such thing as doubt. What is important is that the epistemic operator here does not fulfil an epistemic role.[9] Ignorance is excluded, both in the case of intentions and of beliefs, simply because the intentions and beliefs are, in a non-trivial sense that will be clarified below, *one's own* intentions and beliefs. One is, Hampshire emphasizes, the *author* of one's intentions, and if not the author of one's beliefs, then at any rate *answerable* for them not only to others but also and necessarily to oneself. And if ignorance is *logically* excluded, then so too is knowledge. For any proposition ascribing knowledge is itself a contingent proposition, which has sense only in so far as it excludes an intelligible alternative, namely ignorance or lack of knowledge. But if there is no such thing as ignorance in these kinds of case, then there is no such thing as knowledge either, since there is nothing for an ascription of knowledge to exclude. Hampshire's detailed explorations of the ramifications of this insight shed light on its depth and importance. So it is to this matter, as it is elaborated in *Freedom of the Individual*, that I shall finally turn.

7. Intention, prediction and autonomy

A self-conscious agent has intentions and beliefs, and acts intentionally. He cannot non-redundantly be said to know his intentions

[9] There is nothing odd, let alone contradictory, about this. In 'While you were with me, I forgot all my troubles', the epistemic verb 'forget' plays no epistemic role. The assertion does not signify a failure of memory or loss of knowledge, but a distraction of attention.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

or beliefs, since he cannot, in paradigmatic cases of intending and believing, be ignorant of them, although he may, of course, misstate them. One cannot intelligibly ask an agent 'How do you know that you intend that?' or 'How do you know that you believe that?'. If someone says 'I intend to V', one cannot ask 'Why do you believe that you intend to V?', as one can ask 'Why do you believe that he intends to V?', but only 'Why do you intend to V?'. And that question is a request for his reasons for V-ing, which are *ipso facto* his reasons for intending to V, not reasons for his thinking or knowing that he intends. Similarly, if someone says 'I believe that *p*', the question 'Why do you believe that?' (unlike 'Why do you believe that he believes that?') is a question which asks for the addressee's reasons for believing that *p*, not for his reasons for believing that he believes that *p*. Indeed, in saying 'I intend ...' and 'I believe ...', as opposed to 'I intended ...' and 'I believed ...', one is *expressing* one's intentions and beliefs, rather than *ascribing* intentions and beliefs to oneself. An ascription of intention is compatible with denying that it will be executed, as an ascription of belief is compatible with denying its truth. But one cannot say 'I intend to V, but I shall not', any more than one can say 'I believe that *p*, but not-*p*'.[10]

Nevertheless, in intending to V, one does have special knowledge, not of one's intention, but of one's future action. One can assure another that one will V tomorrow, precisely because one intends to V tomorrow. That knowledge of the future is not inductive, although it presupposes inductive knowledge of possibilities of action open to one and of one's abilities, and any such claim regarding one's future can be rebutted on the basis of inductive knowledge. But my knowledge of my future action is based only on my having the firm intention that I have. In virtue of my resolution, I know without evidence that if I have the means, and nothing untoward happens, I shall V (FI p. 60).[11]

I may be unsure or not know what another person intends to do, and if so, I may need to find out. But if a self-conscious agent is unsure or does not know what he intends to do, that does not mean that he intends something, but needs to find out what it is. It means that he needs to decide what to do, i.e. to form an intention. And if he decides, his reasons are not reasons for his prediction that he will

[10] That is why it is perhaps a little misleading to speak, as Strawson does, of *self-ascription* of P-predicates 'in the same logical breathe', as it were, as one speaks of *other-ascription* (see *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959), ch. 3.

[11] All parenthetical references flagged 'FI' are to *Freedom of the Individual* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

V, but are reasons for him to V. His reason for the prediction that he will be there tomorrow is that he has decided to go. So 'I don't know what I intend to do', unlike 'I don't know what he intends to do', is not a confession of ignorance, but of indecision (FI p. 68). And, as remarked above, 'I know what I intend to do' is not a cognitive claim but equivalent to 'I have made up my mind'.

So, I am the author of my intentions, obviously so when they are formed by decision, but also, in a looser sense, when they are not. For here too, I have, or think I have, reasons for doing what I intend to do. If I intend to V, and am asked 'Why?', and can think of *no* reason, then my actions will be, as it were, opaque to me. I shall not understand why I am doing what I am doing. But if I further know that V-ing would be a mistake for me, I will change my mind. If I do not, but continue to insist that I shall V, then I imply that I can't help V-ing. If I go on to V, despite the knowledge that I have weighty reasons against V-ing and none for it, then I am in the grip of a compulsion, and am not, in this respect, a free agent (FI p. 70f.). Again, Hampshire draws attention to the striking first/third-person asymmetry: I can be certain that A will not V, if I know that it would be a mistake for him to V and I know that he will know or believe it to be so. But the agent does not need this reflexive knowledge about himself. If he comes to know or believe that it would be a mistake for him to V, he does not need to 'ascertain' that he has thus concluded (FI p. 74).

One who avows or reports his beliefs or intentions is not in the position of a third-person reporting another's beliefs or intentions, i.e. of having to ensure that things are as he says they are. In his own case, he just has to be truthful.[12] But, in addition, he must conceive of his beliefs and intentions as appropriate, or at any rate not as inappropriate (FI pp. 76-8). To avow that one believes that *p* is simultaneously to assert that *p*. It is to take a stand on whether it is the case that *p*, for one cannot say 'I believe that *p*, but it is not the case that *p*'. So one cannot find oneself with a belief which one knows to be subjectively incredible, by contrast with finding oneself saddled with passions that are groundless. To recognize its subjective incredibility is to cease to hold it. If one is still haunted by such an absurd or groundless thought, one will not say 'Nevertheless, I still believe that *p*', but rather 'I cannot help thinking (imagining) that *p*'. Here one is in the grip of a fantasy or delusion.

Neither believing nor intending are passions. Rather, Hampshire

[12] As Wittgenstein remarked, in these kinds of cases, truthfulness guarantees truth. Matters are, however, more complicated when it comes to self-deception and unconscious beliefs and intentions.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

argues in Spinoza's wake, we are active in believing what we believe and in intending what we intend. Irrational, groundless emotions are passions, from which an agent can dissociate himself. They are not truly his—he is invaded by them. Learning their causes may enable him to control them by means of various instrumental techniques. But beliefs and intentions are not like that. I do not *control* my beliefs, but I cannot dissociate myself from them, as I can from my passive emotions—I am answerable for them before the tribunal of reason as I understand it. I cannot have a belief which I simultaneously hold to be misguided. Unlike phobias, I cannot view a belief as something I just happen, deplorably, to have. And this difference between beliefs and passions is exhibited in the fact that to admit to a phobia is not to endorse it, whereas to declare a belief is. I am not the author of my passions, Hampshire observes, but I am the responsible author of my intentions, and, to some degree, of my beliefs (FI p. 80). Hence first-person authority with regard to my beliefs and intentions stems not from privileged, introspective 'access' to one's mind, which yields, as the empiricists thought, indubitable and infallible knowledge, but stems rather from the fact that I am their author. I form some of my intentions and beliefs through deliberation and decision, and others, though not the upshot of deliberation, are endorsed by me in their expression. So they are fully *mine*, in a sense in which my passive attitudes and emotions may not be. They are, as Joseph Raz has put it, responsive to reason as I, rightly or wrongly, see it.[13]

Hampshire links his Spinozist conception of the activity and passivity of the mind with a correlative conception of human freedom. 'The notion of freedom', he writes, 'properly enters into the analysis of intentional action. The man who is comparatively free in his conduct of his life is active in the adoption of his own attitudes and his own way of life; his decisions and intentions are the best guide to his future actions; and just this is the significance of calling him "free". He is a free man, in so far as he is the authority on his own future actions as issuing from his decisions; then his self-knowledge is predominantly of the kind that comes not from observation and induction, but from making up his mind what his attitudes and actions are to be' (FI p.112).

The conception Hampshire advances is, I think, a profound elucidation of rational agency. It seems to me to illuminate not so much the notion of human freedom as that of human autonomy and self-determination. If I am forced to live my life in a prison, I am

[13] J. Raz, 'When We Are Ourselves: the Active and the Passive', repr. in *Engaging Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

not free, no matter how active I am in the formation and endorsement of my beliefs, intentions and active emotions. If I retain my rationality, I may be free *from* irrational passive attitudes and emotions that might hold me in their grip, even though I am not a free man. So, imprisoned as I am, I retain my autonomy—I am, as it were, master in my own house.

St John's College, Oxford.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819105000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press